

# CATHOLIC THEATRE

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## Projecting The Inner Scene

by S. M. LORENZ and ROBERT NUNN

Mt. Mercy College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Last year we became interested in the idea—as written up some time ago in the *PLAYERS MAGAZINE*—of using projected scenery in our senior play. For several years we had been doing plays for the same reason that we were choosing the projected setting—the difficulty of building satisfactory sets. Ours is a girls' school with very little in the budget for the drama department. Long years ago we had wearied of using nothing but a cyclorama for all settings even when we had set pieces for numberless uses and locations.

The senior play had one garden scene near a beach. Fortunately, for an experiment, we had just such a scene in our collection of colored slides for our stereopticon projector. However, we did not have a projector that would be strong enough for stage projection. It was necessary to get the proper lenses from the Midwest Stage Lighting Company in Chicago, 1-6" condensing lens, 1 adapter with slide carrier, 1 objective lens all carefully fitted together. They had but this one set of lenses that would be satisfactory for our purpose. We rented that.

Next we needed a screen. A cellulose acetate screen used by television companies was out of the question. After a little experimenting we decided upon a four gauge plastic material fifty-four inches wide bound together with scotch tape to make a curtain or screen nine by fifteen feet. As we used a blue medium the night of the play, the scotch tape was not discernible. The audience was delighted. When in the play the girls left the terrace to go to the beach it was most convincing.

### Inquiries Made

This year I began to make more extensive inquiries. I had visited Mr. Stanley Wood who had done so much

in projected scenery with the Linneback at Iowa State Teachers College. And although what we wanted to use was the lens projector which is far more capable of giving a detailed picture than the direct beam lenseless projector such as his, he was able to tell me much about focusing and photographing a picture for projection in order to avoid showing the light source. This is generally above the screen at center.

In the late fall I went into Chicago to see the light director at Goodman Memorial Theatre. He told me a director at one of the universities had made a most satisfactory screen by covering both sides of sharktooth scrim at the same time with liquid plastic. It was applied like roller paint. I went to the Maharam Fabric Corporation and priced the sharktooth scrim which is an imported fabric thirty feet wide. It was most reasonable. Then after much inquiring I found that the Castolite Company in Woodstock, Illinois, manufactured a liquid plastic. Unfortunately, time did not permit a sufficient experimental period before the play, and it was necessary to resort again to the plastic material that we used last spring.

Our worries were greater now as we intended to produce the plays in a much larger auditorium, and there was the fear that the screen pictures might wash out when we turned on the front lights to illuminate the acting area. Those lights should not touch the screens and yet faces had to be lighted properly. Mr. Hart, who had had much experience in stage and TV lighting, offered us his assistance. He did an excellent job of just avoiding the screens with the stage and yet provided enough illumination. Even the furniture against the screens was well lighted. Doubtless three illuminated screens had something to do with that.

*(Continued on page eight)*

## PLAYWRITING

by SISTER MARCELLA MARIE, C.S.J.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *At the eleventh annual convention of the West Central Region of NCTC held in Omaha, Nebraska, March 9-10, Sister Marcella Marie, C.S.J. and Sister M. Felice, C.S.J., both of the College of St. Teresa, Kansas City, Missouri were on a playwriting panel. A summary of the discussion, written by Sister Marcella Marie, follows.*

When a regional meeting of the Catholic Theatre Conference sets aside one session on playwriting, even though it is only a half-hour session, the Conference is aware of the need for young Catholic playwrights. But the session must be more than inspirational. If we are not moved to action then the time spent is wasted time. No matter how many sessions in the various regions are devoted to playwriting, if plays are not being written by our Catholic college students—and they are not, at least in large numbers—then the sessions are abortive.

If the group assembled here in Omaha at this West Central Region of the NCTC could meet next year at the regional meeting in Kansas City and report on the number of plays written by the students or faculty members of the colleges represented (and there are 25 colleges represented here) and the number of original plays produced during the year, then we might feel we were beginning to reap a harvest. At present we want the students to produce. We'll suffer the chaff to grow along for the present with the wheat.

### CONSIDER FOUR POINTS

Briefly there are four points to consider in initiating a program of playwriting in our colleges. First, the faculty, especially the English teachers and the drama teachers, must be convinced of the need for *modern* Catholic theatre; second, some kind of careful scrutiny of the present curriculum must be made to see what courses can contribute to the formation of the playwright; third, with competent guidance the young student must be alerted to the wealth of material in his Catholic life that can be utilized for dramatic presentation; and fourth, the student must be stimulated to write.

We can not begin to accomplish anything in playwriting until we ourselves are convinced there is a need for a *vital, modern Catholic* theatre. All the arts, as Our Holy Father has so eloquently urged in his recent encyclical on Church Music, must be used for the greater honor of God and in the service of His Church. And if we have to fall back continually on what has been done in former ages, if we are forced to resort to the classics because we cannot find any suitable modern play, then something is awry.

Modern architecture is being used for our new churches. Why must sixteenth century drama be the substantial fare of the stage? I am not decrying the classics. And I admit that the hard-pressed director is sometimes forced to fall back

(Continued on page fourteen)

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

by ROBERT BRIDE

*Reprint from the BULLETIN of the Catholic Theatre of Rochester*

A community theatre that has the magnificent courage to attach the word "Catholic" to its name becomes *ipso facto* something different. It is not just another theatrical aggregation that produces plays for money, for social acceptance in the community, or for "kicks" for the member (and there are many of this type among them) who thrills if the local drama critics "carelessly but nod on him." A Catholic theatre is not a group of Catholics who do *plays*: it is a group of people who do *Catholic* plays in the right spirit and for the right reason.

The most obvious distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic theatre is the type of play it produces. The frequent temptation that comes when the treasury balance is dwindling is to lower the standards and "do the sort of play that will appeal to everyone." Unfortunately for the treasurer who must pay the bills, this type of play is not worthy of so lofty a modifier as "Catholic," and neither is the group that produces it. If we are honest, we must admit that the cast of Gheon's "Marriage of St. Francis" will play to a lot of empty seats, while across the street at the Bijoux customers are standing to see "SEE HOW THEY RUN." A first-rate Catholic play will look pretty anemic box office wise as long as it must compete with a first-rate farce such as the one mentioned. There is no demand for Catholic plays by comparison with the demand for the other sort. It is for us to create that demand, and we cannot do that by lowering our standards, by coming down to the level of those who do not know what we know. We must bring them up to our level.

History clearly shows that the matrix of theatre was religion. The earliest recorded theatrical events were religious in theme and intent. Then through misuse and abuse, theatre sank to such a low level that it was scorned by both church and state. The actor was the lowest member of society, denied the sacraments and denied the privileges of a common citizen. Through the years theatre has been permitted to rise to its present status which is low enough not to glorify God, and

(Continued on page twelve)

Edgar Kloten, Managing-Director of the Wagon Wheel Theatre, Rockton, Illinois, announces two productions for April. **THE TWO MRS. CARROLS**, a tantalizing, terrifying thriller—April 10 to April 22, and **THE GRAND PRIZE**, a Secretary wins her boss in a TV contest—April 24 to May 6. The new theatre opened on February 28 with **MY THREE ANGELS**.

## From the President's Desk

All members alert! We are delighted to announce that the Catholic Theatre annual is again going to be edited by Mr. Edgar C. Kloten, director of the Wagon Wheel Theatre in Rockton, Illinois.

In order to have a highly representative issue we are asking each member to submit material and carefully selected photographs. Editor Kloten requests that we have a glossy print, 5 x 7, 8 x 10, or 7 x 11 and not a cut or engraving. The prints should be taken by a professional photographer if possible. Please write the name of your organization, the title of the play and any other descriptive information on the back of the picture submitted. The cost of engraving, as in the past, is \$5.00 and is paid for by each group. Please send your best pictures! Also, in preparing copy for this special issue, directors will please feature in their accounts—approximately 200 words—some special or original production, a problem met and solved, a novel and interesting approach to one of the plays, a new adaptation or some other information that may be helpful to other NCTC members. A listing of past season's productions should also be included. Please have material in the Secretarial office by June 1.

The Executive Board member directly in charge of the annual is Mr. Joseph F. Rice. If there are any problems or difficulties you wish solved, please write to Mr. Rice at Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, California.

In the meantime, best wishes for success in your spring production.

*Sister Mary Angelita, S.V.M.*

## Just Between Us . . .

I am much impressed by the editorship of the Catholic Theatre publication. It is neat, well planned and with good articles. I think, too, you have made it attractive reading for the younger high school groups which now provide a large segment of the membership. The feature articles have been adult and challenging, too. I especially liked the one "Intuition and Tyrone Guthrie."

Edgar Kloten  
Wagon Wheel Theatre  
Rockton, Illinois

. . . I especially liked Sr. Mary Olive's "The Illumination of Versailles."

Corinne Dallmer  
Laredo, Texas

## WELCOME MAT

Rev. A. J. Deeman, S.J.  
Regis College  
W. 50th Ave. & Lowell Blvd.  
Denver, Colorado

Sister Mary Martina  
Sacred Heart Dominican  
College  
1911 Crawford  
Houston 3, Texas

Sister Marie-Celestine, Principal  
Saint Mary's Academy  
Miami Road  
South Bend 14, Indiana

Miss Louella E. McMahon  
Department of Speech  
Eveleth High School  
Eveleth, Minnesota

Catholic Central High School  
Barclay at Laketon  
Muskegon, Michigan

St Theresa's Academy  
5600 Main Street  
Kansas City 13, Mo.

St. Hubert's Catholic High  
for Girls  
Tarresdale & Cottman Avenue  
Philadelphia 36, Penn.

Sr. Mary William, O.P.  
1230 W. Market Street  
Akron 13, Ohio

Sister M. Toresine, C.S.F.  
Havre, Montana

Campion Academy  
Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin  
Rev. Dan Higgins, S.J.

Villa Marie Academy  
2403 West Lake Road  
Erie, Pennsylvania  
Sister Maura Ann

Holy Name School  
2901 Frontenelle Blvd.  
Omaha 4, Nebraska  
Sr. Mary Evangelista, O.S.M.

School of the Holy Child  
Lafayette Avenue  
Suffern, New York

Sister Maria Consolate, S.V.M.  
Visitation Convent  
Dubuque, Iowa

Divine Savior High School  
4257 North 100th Street  
Milwaukee 16, Wisconsin

Rosary Cathedral Drama Group  
251 Kevin Place  
Toledo 10, Ohio  
Mrs. Rosemary Wernert

Sister Mary Rebecca  
Academy of Immaculate Heart  
311 Tenth Street  
Coeur D'Alene, Idaho

It was good to learn that the Catholic Theatre Conference is "out of the red" and well on the way to a sound financial footing.

I was particularly interested in the article in the January issue of the bulletin on a "Christocentric" theatre, for it voiced the philosophy of the Marymount Dramatic Club. I particularly recall the audience reaction to our performances of Gheon's THE COMEDIAN, and to Saunder Lewis' THE CHRISTMAS CANDLE, and T. S. Eliot's MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL. The worthwhileness of those plays was evident in the enthusiasm with which club members tried out their expressions of satisfaction with the finished performance.

Marymount College  
Tarrytown, New York



# FESTIVAL NEWS

## WEST CENTRAL REGION ELEVENTH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Seven hundred delegates from upwards of fifty schools in the five-state West Central Region attended the two day convention in Omaha, Nebraska.

The new College of St. Mary on the outskirts of Omaha played host for the two day activity. The excellently equipped Marian Hall theatre, the Little Theatre and numerous classrooms, conference rooms and lounges made an ideal location for meetings, demonstrations and plays. St. Mary's also accommodated a number in its dorms and guest rooms. The entire Region's thanks go to Sister Mary Jean, R.S.M., of St. Mary College who served as convention chairman, and to her staff from Omaha for the complete success of this, the Nebraska Area's first regional convention.

In addition to the activities held on the college campus, other events were held in downtown hotels, the Creighton University Theatre, Mercy High School and Holy Cross Church.

As a traditional activity six Prize Plays from the five divisional areas of the region were presented by the following high schools:

NOBODY SLEEPS—Holy Name High, Omaha, Nebraska  
THE ROMANCERS—Nerinx Hall, St. Louis, Mo.  
EVERYMAN—St. Agnes High, Kansas City, Kansas  
MINOR MIRACLE—St. Louis University High, St. Louis, Mo.  
TRIAL SCENE FROM ST. JOAN—St. Mary of the Plains High, Dodge City, Kansas  
THE UGLY DUCKLING—Monte Cassino, Tulsa, Oklahoma

The Best Actor Award went to John Bray playing "McClain" in MINOR MIRACLE and the Best Actress Award to Rosemary Robeson playing "Joan" in ST. JOAN. The Prize plays were selected from local area festivals held earlier in the season.

Two contest-type programs were successfully initiated during this convention: a Theatre Quiz Jack Pot in which "quiz kids" from ten high schools competed; and an "Audience Judges the Play" contest.

Demonstrations in makeup, lighting, children's theatre, dance drama and lectures on Play Production, teacher placement, playwriting, musical comedy, T.V. and Shakespeare completed the general program.

### SPECIAL COLLEGE DAY DISCUSSION PROGRAM

Following the suggestions brought forth at the National Convention at Notre Dame last June, Dr. Earl Bach of Loretto Heights College, Denver, and Father Robert A. Johnston, S.J., of St. Louis University, planned six related discussion topics aimed to develop college activity in N.C.T.C. Twenty-two

colleges in the mid-west area sent one hundred and thirty-four delegates to the meeting.

The conclusions from this most stimulating meeting are being prepared for publication in a future issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE. The college student delegates voted that a follow-up meeting be held in early June, and asked Mundelein College, Chicago, to consider being host.

### OFFICERS ELECTED

The following officers were elected for the West Central Region for the coming year:

*Regional Chairman*—Sister Agnes Virginia, Hogan High School, Kansas City, Mo.

*Regional Secretary*—Sister M. Noelle, Glennon High School, Kansas City, Mo.

*Regional Treasurer*—Sister Mary Jean, College of St. Mary, Omaha, Nebraska

*Regional Convention Chairman, '57*—Sister M. Roberta, St. Agnes High School, Kansas City, Mo.

Two new offices were created on an experimental basis:

*College Coordinator*—Sister M. Felice, College of St. Teresa, Kansas City, Mo. This office will aid in carrying on the college activity planned for the region during the coming year.

*Local Area Corresponding Secretaries:*

St. Louis Area—Sister M. Alene, Notre Dame High School, St. Louis, Mo.

Kansas City Area—Sister M. Stephen, Ursuline College, Paola, Kansas

Omaha Area—Sister Martin de Porres, Guardian Angels High, Westpoint, Nebraska

Oklahoma Area—Sister M. Immaculata, Benedictine Heights College, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Wichita Area—Sister Ann Cecile, St. Mary of the Plains High School, Dodge City, Kans.

The corresponding secretaries are to gather, coordinate and forward news to Editors of CATHOLIC THEATRE and to the regional newsletter, "The Genesian"

### MID-ATLANTIC AREA

A general session of the Mid-Atlantic area was held on March 4, at Marymount College, New York City. Through the kindness of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary and the dramatic association of the College, the members of the National Catholic Theatre Conference and all potential members were invited to the production THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST by Oscar Wilde.

A festival of short scene or one-act plays will be held for the high schools at Mount St. Ursula Academy, New York City, on Saturday, May 19th. More concerning this in the May Bulletin.

(Continued on page nine)

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## BROADWAY IN REVIEW

by MRS. CHRISTOPHER WYATT

**FALLEN ANGELS:**—Reckless farce by Noel Coward—once a 'flop'—now revived for Nancy Walker. At the **PLAYHOUSE**.

**MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT:**—Tasteless and repetitious comedy of Central Park West with E. G. Robinson as an elderly widower by the author of **MARTY**. At the **ANTA**.

**TIME LIMIT:**—Is the man who breaks under torture—physical or mental—actually a traitor? The scene is the Judge Advocate's office with flashbacks to Korea. Excellent cast headed by Arthur Kennedy and Richard Kiley. At the **BOOTH**.

**THE LARK:**—Julie Harris gives an electric performance as St. Joan but Anouilh has deliberately falsified history in making Bishop Cauchon, who was wholly venal, sympathetic, and in the portrait of the Grand Inquisitor who was never at the trial. Very fine production. At the **LONGACRE**.

**THE PONDER HEART:**—Completely delightful Southern comedy of quixotic Uncle Daniel Ponder and his hill-billy

bride with David Wayne as Uncle Daniel and Una Merkel as his understanding niece. At the **MUSIC BOX**.

**UNCLE VANYA:**—Chekhov's rare qualities of humor and compassion are delicately blended in this unusual production with Franchot Tone—at his best—Clarence Derwent and Signe Hasso and George Voskovec as Vanya. Something to be remembered. At the **4TH STREET**.

**DARK LADY OF THE SONNETS** and **THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE:**—Very amusing performances of two of Shaw's earlier plays presented for the first time in New York. At the **CHERRY LANE**.

**AGE AND GRACE:**—The Rev. Dominic Rover, O.P., co-author of **IN PRAISE OF FOLLY**—the best of the St. Thomas More dramas—is now presenting a play on the perils of spiritual direction and the crisis produced by a young and sincerely zealous curate. But the audiences so enjoy Father Rover's sense of humor that they tend to treat it as a comedy. At **BLACKFRIARS**.

# Cross Country Circuit

## COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY

Immaculate Heart College, Hollywood, California, will present FINIAN'S RAINBOW April 20-27. Sister Marie Fleurette and Joseph F. Rice are directing.

\* \* \*

MADWOMAN OF CHAILLOT was successfully produced at Mundelein College, Chicago, in early February. Sister M. Jeanelle directed.

\* \* \*

A modern version of ANTIGONE was presented by the Drama department of Loyola University, Chicago, February 9 and 10. Production was under the direction of H. Dickinson.

\* \* \*

On Wednesday, April 18th, The Cercle Francais of Marymount College, Tarrytown, New York, will present Moliere's LES PRECIEUSES RIDICULES under the direction of Miss Ritzenthaler of the Dramatic Club. On Wednesday, April 25th, Mr. Dick Walsh of the National Council of Catholic Men will address the club on Graham Greene's thought provoking play HINT OF AN EXPLANATION. This play was produced last fall by Mr. Walsh for the Catholic Hour TV program.

\* \* \*

Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa will present SKIN OF OUR TEETH in arena style on May 4, 5, and 6. Sister Mary Xavier, B.V.M. is head of the Drama Department at Clarke.

\* \* \*

Father John J. Leonard, S.J., Faculty Moderator of the Drama Club at Fordham University, New York City, announces an April production of MACBETH by the "Mimes and Mimmers."

\* \* \*

The Speech and Drama Department of the College of St. Mary of the Springs, Columbus, Ohio, will present Merry Masquers in THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE on April 20th and 22nd in the College Little Theatre. The stage play, adapted by Joseph F. Rice from the R-K-O Radio Pictures movie of the same name, is under the direction of Sister Elizabeth Seton, O.P.

\* \* \*

The Fontbonne College Footlights Club, St. Louis, Missouri, presented THE ROYAL FAMILY by Kaufman and Ferber on Sunday, February 26 in the College auditorium. This satire on the Barrymore Family is the story of three generations of a theatrical family and shows that acting is more than just getting your name in lights because—"So you get your name in lights and a fuse blows—then where are you?"

The Cap and Bells of St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, is presenting an original play with music, SUMMER IN MY HEART, on April 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22. The Book and Lyrics are by George Nider, '56 and the Music by Edward Metz, '57.

Also, the presentation of THE STRONG AND THE LONELY, another play by George Nider, was judged first in the Maryland Province Inter-Collegiate One-Act-Play Contest, held at St. Joseph's on February 19th. This play was then judged the winner of the Inter-Provincial Finals, held at Fordham University, New York City, on March 3rd. It was also awarded first prize at the UNESCO Drama Festival, held at Harcum Junior College on March 8th.

\* \* \*

On February 10, 11, and 12 Calvert Hall College, Baltimore, Maryland, presented the musical BRIGADOON. The Books and Lyrics were by Alan Jay Lerner with Music by Frederick Loewe. Brother Gordian and Brother Anthony were Faculty moderators for the production.

\* \* \*

The College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, Minnesota, presented Fay Fanin's GOODBYE, MY FANCY at the Rockhurst Auditorium on February 8. Sister M. Anella, O.S.B. is Departmental Head.

\* \* \*

## COMMUNITY THEATRE

The Mobile Theatre Guild's April production will be ANGEL STREET—(GASLIGHT)—a perennial thriller. It will be given by the Student Guild.

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## HIGH SCHOOL

St. Joseph Academy presented its first Chamber Theatre performance of **BROADWAY RHYTHM** on Sunday, March 11th in the Little Theatre of the Academy in Frontenac, Missouri. An informal Green Room Coffee Hour followed the show.

\* \* \*

Genesians at Rosati-Kain High School in St. Louis are on the road locally with a skit for Promoters of the Propagation of the Faith Society. Thus they lend their talent to the mission cause and at the same time introduce parish non-theatre goers to arena theatre in their theatre-in-the-round presentation.

\* \* \*

Theatre activities at St. Joseph High School in Omaha, Nebraska are indicative of a healthy growth in this field. The senior speech class pioneered the Theatre-in-the-Round in this school when they gave a series of humorous skits on Mardi Gras. The result was a contagious atmosphere of cohesion and friendliness among the two hundred students of the school. A three-act comedy, **TIGER ON HIS TOES**, is calling forth much of the energy and time of this same group for production on April 14th and 15th. Sister M. Cordula, C.P.P.S. is the Drama and Speech Director.

\* \* \*

Marywood High School, Evanston, Illinois, presented **HIGH GROUND** on February 12 and 14 under the direction of Mary Gavin.

\* \* \*

Academy of Our Lady, Chicago, presented **THE YOUNG AND FAIR** by N. Richard Nash on April 4, 6, 7 and 8. A special matinee for religious was held on Saturday, April 7. Therese Marie Cuny was director.

\* \* \*

Josephinum High School, Chicago, has selected **SISTER CRAVEN** for the senior class play. Mary Beecher is director.

\* \* \*

Mallinckrodt High School, Wilmette, Illinois presented a successful production of **BRIEF MUSIC** recently. R. McClusky is in charge of drama.

\* \* \*

Sister Mary Catherine Ann reports that her students at Our Lady of Angels Academy, Clinton, Iowa, have been producing their yearly quota of plays under the direction of Mrs. V. H. Ryan.

At Christmas time the Juniors presented **BEAUTIFUL UPON THE MOUNTAIN** by Miss Catherine Robb. The piece contains many of the lovely Messianic prophecies. The Sophomore players gave an evening of one-acts: **INTRODUCING MOPSY** and **PAJAMA PARTY**. The Freshmen play selections were: **HIGH JINKS AT HOLLISTER** and **HELLO, HOLLYWOOD!** The Seniors major spring production is a serious drama, **THE YOUNG AND FAIR** by N. Richard Nash, and provides an excellent challenge for a talented and ambitious class.

The Senior Class of Alvernia High School, Chicago, will premier a new script, **BEFORE HER SHOES WERE OLD** by Sister M. Francis Borgia, O.S.F., and directed by Anna Helen Reuter. The play is based on the life and time of Margaret Clitherow which will be presented April 21st through 29th at 8:30 in the school auditorium. There will also be a matinee for religious on April 28th.

\* \* \*

In October the drama class at St. Margaret's Academy, Minneapolis, Minnesota, brought **LITTLE WOMEN** to life for an audience of children from "six to sixty."

Combining Christmas songs with Advent verses, psalms, and antiphons, speech and glee club students presented a Christmas program at an all-school assembly on December 22.

**SEVEN NUNS AT LAS VEGAS**, by Natalie White, was presented on February 5 and 6 by members of the drama class.

The Junior Genesians at St. Margaret's are now working on cuttings from **AS YOU LIKE IT** and **MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** to be played "in the round" at the spring meeting of the Genesian Society. The drama and speech classes are under the direction of Sister Annella, C.S.J.

\* \* \*

Drama clubs' first production, **LITTLE WOMEN**, took the "on stage" cues February 10 and 12 in the new Marian theatre at Mount Marty High School, Yankton, South Dakota. The three act comedy, written by Kristin Lawrence, is an adaptation of Louisa M. Alcott's book. Sister M. Jeanne, O.S.B. directed the play.

### Playwriting Contest

The Saint Louis University Theatre announces "an annual playwriting contest for Catholic playwrights." The first contest offers a prize of \$100 for a full-length play, and closes on April 30, 1956. Contest entries must be unpublished, but not necessarily unproduced, plays. Winning plays will receive three public performances, and will remain the property of the authors. It is hoped that at least one play can be accepted each year, but more than one award may possibly be made. The University Theatre has embarked on "a permanent program to assist Catholic playwrights writing plays with a Catholic point of view." The Theatre is seeking material that is Catholic in the best sense of the term, not merely pious dramas, and not plays which are "religious" merely because they concern nuns or priests. All entries will be returned if accompanied by a stamped return envelope, and should be addressed to: Dept. of Speech, St. Louis University, 3650 Lindell Blvd., St. Louis 8, Mo.

## PROJECTING THE INTERIOR SCENE

*(Continued from page one)*

### Three Walls

Indeed it was the three screens that had caused us so many anxious hours. There had been articles written describing the back screen, but at the sides black flats had been suggested. Such a setting seemed unsatisfactory. If an interior were to be used surely three walls would be required. But could two side walls be used? Would the lights of one wall or screen wash out the picture on the opposite screen or dim it? Would there be too wide an angle if that had to be resorted to to avoid light interference? We had had no trouble with our model plastic screen stage; but that was only three feet high. Would it approximate conditions on the large stage enough to be dependable? There was only one way to find out. The order was given and the large plastic screens were made. When the stage was set, Mr. Nunn and I took our places and Mr. Hart turned on the projector with the brilliantly colored slides. The picture was discernible—at the top! Even this washed out when we viewed it at different angles.

After some discussion Mr. Hart asked for some cheesecloth. Besides cheesecloth we had a large gold scrim curtain. He took the scrim and threw it in front of the plastic from the top of the screen frame, and—lo and behold!—there was our colorful scene. Over the scrim we put another piece of plastic to approximate the university screen we had been speaking about. But there did not seem to be enough difference to warrant the slight loss of illumination we noticed; hence we set the plastic aside. Next, we experimented with the cheesecloth. Instead of putting it in front of the plastic as we had the scrim, Mr. Hart hung it in back so that it would be between the light and the plastic screen. We agreed that more detail was discernible. Our final decision was that we would have three curtains made of cheesecloth—however a better quality was needed as that with which we had experimented had not been closely enough woven—and fasten them tightly against the plastic. This could be done easily with a wood stapler if we used cardboard strips for reinforcement. We feared that the seams might show—what an adventure to have a scrim thirty feet wide!—which could spoil a scene, but only one plastic strip was noticeable the night of the play, and that only when light colors were projected. We had taken the precaution to use the scotch mending tape with the dull finish for binding our strips of plastic together. Of course there had been no overlapping; the edges had been set side by side then taped. The seams in the cheesecloth did not show.

### Light Used

Our next great concern was our lights for projection. I had been informed by Mr. Wilfred of the Art Institute of

Light, Inc. that we should use a 5000 watt projector. We had neither 5000 watts of light nor a projector. We did manage to borrow three 1000 watt planolights from the theatre, and were able to substitute in each a 1500 watt lamp. Nevertheless, one cannot help notice that there is a great difference between 4500 watts of light and 15,000! But ours was not a large theatre, neither had we a barrage of lights out front, nor did we need such. The acting area was rather surprisingly well lighted with only five baby spots, and the screens were not washed out. That bears some explanation. From direct front all pictures were clear. From one side or the other the rear screen, 11' x 16' and the opposite screen from where one sat (a screen which measured 11' x 11') was never dimmed, however, there was such a wash out on the screen on one's side of the auditorium. Stronger projection lights are necessary.

At present we are experimenting with 35mm projectors. We need high wattage, and a three inch lens to enlarge our picture. An added advantage of having a 35mm projector would be in having more sources available from which to secure slides. Then, too, much time and money could be saved as Mr. Nunn develops his own 35mm slides. It takes between ten days and two weeks to receive transparencies from New York.

### Source of Scenes

But where to get the scenes for projection? We have decided that that can be done best here at the college. As I have mentioned we have our model plastic stage for testing the projected picture. Now we need a model stage for designing our picture and for photographing. There has been much discussion as to the size of the model. Two of the men, Mr. Hart and Mr. Wernimont, of the Wernimont Display Company, feel that there should be one wall made, possibly of standard hardboard, the same size as the rear screen. If it were made in three sections with proper door and window openings provided for, it could be repainted, readjusted, restyled after each photograph. There would be a realism possibly unattainable in a smaller set. However, it would have to be set up in a room with very high ceiling for photographing since the camera must be placed at the same angle as the projector somewhere above the screen.

The best argument for the small model—for our stage, rear screen  $2\frac{3}{4}' \times 4'$  and side screens  $2\frac{3}{4}' \times 2\frac{3}{4}'$ —is that it can be easily designed, carried to Mr. Nunn's and there easily photographed at the correct angle. The large model would necessitate the carrying of all the required photographing equipment here to the college since this is where the designing will be done. The stage itself would be the most logical place for photographing the set for there simple distortion—distortion caused by placing the projector above the screen at the center—and compound distortion—placing the projector above the screen at the side—could best be handled.

*(Continued on page thirteen)*



## FESTIVAL NEWS

(Continued from page four)

### PACIFIC COAST AREA

The Seventh Annual One-Act Play Festival sponsored by The Archdiocesan Dramatics Council was held at Immaculate Heart College, Los Angeles, California, on February 10 and 11.

The Play Festival has for its purpose the promotion of Catholic Action through the medium of Catholic Drama. It endeavors to develop in Catholic boys and girls an active interest in drama and the keen determination to keep the theatre the truly good entertainment that it is meant to be. A Play Festival brings together students and directors for the interchange of ideas on the problems of acting and play production.

Universities and Colleges participating included: Loyola University, Mount St. Mary's College, Marymount College, Immaculate Heart College.

High Schools included: Pius X, Mount Carmel, St. Monica's, Our Lady Queen of Angels, Notre Dame, St. Agnes, Mayfield, Bishop Conaty, Chaminade, Immaculate Heart, Junipero Serra.

National Catholic Theatre Advisor for the Festival was Mr. Joseph Rice. Sectional Chairman was Mr. Frank Hanley.

### MIDWEST REGIONAL MEETING

The President and Faculty of Loras College, Dubuque, Iowa, announce a Midwest Regional Meeting of the National Catholic Theatre Conference for directors, teachers and major students of drama in Dubuque on April 20, 21, and 22.

The Regional meeting is being called by Father Karl G. Schroeder, Head of the Drama Department at Loras. All activities will be held in Saint Joseph Hall and will feature the Loring Dancers of Hollywood, Mr. Norris Houghton, Miss Gertrude Walsh, Mr. Robert Whitehead and Mr. John Houseman. Loras will present their ANNIE GET YOUR GUN on April 20 at 8:30 p.m. for the meeting.

### LA CROSSE AREA

The Eighth Drama Festival for the schools in the LaCrosse area was hosted by Regis High School in Eau Claire, Wisconsin on Saturday, February 25. Miss Therese Marie Cuny, well known to all readers of *Catholic Theatre*, was critic-judge.

A special feature of the Festival was an address by Sister Angelita, B.V.M., president of N.C.T.C. Sister opened the afternoon session. At this time she announced that Sister Mary Susan, S.S.N.D., of McDonell High School, Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin, was appointed Chairman of the Central Region.

Nine schools participated in the Festival. For the first time in the history of this Drama Festival the schools received certificates indicating their participation in the Festival as well as the play ratings received by the critic-judge. For the first

time, too, individual certificates for "excellence in acting" were issued. Fourteen student actors were awarded the "excellence" certificates.

Special guests of the Festival included Sister Angelita and Sister Carolanne of Davenport, Iowa; Sister Charitas, Sister Irenaeus, Sister Annella, Sister Mary Ruth from St. Paul; Sister Timothy and Sister Margaret James from Duluth, Brother Raymond and Brother James Frederick from St. Mary's College in Duluth.

### KANSAS CITY UNIT

The Kansas City Unit of NCTC held their third annual play festival at the College of St. Teresa, February 25. Seven high schools participated. The presentations were:

St. Mary's High School—"A Sunny Morning"

St. Agnes High School—"Everyman"

Loretto Academy—"The Wonder Hat"

Hogan High School—"Twelfth Night"

Glennon High School—"Infanta"

St. Joseph's High School—"The Red Key"

St. Teresa's Academy—"The Princess Marries  
the Page"

St. Agnes High School won the highest rating for their presentation of "Everyman" and was awarded the St. Teresa Alumnae Trophy for Dramatic Achievement. They also had the honor of presenting their play at the West-Central Regional Convention held in Omaha, Nebraska, March 9-10. Sister M. Roberta, O.S.U., is the director. Hogan High School and St. Teresa's Academy were rated second and third places respectively. Mrs. Dorothy Graham was the critic-judge.

### INDIANA AREA

The Catholic Colleges and Little Theatre groups of Indiana met at Marion College, Indianapolis on March 17 for the annual one-act play festival. St. Mary-of-the-Woods presented ANTIGONE.

### N. C. T. C. Membership Statistics

Regular Members ----- 483

Subscribers ----- 86

#### STUDENTS

College & University ----- 114

High School ----- 1610

Total ----- 2293

# Strictly Teen

## A TRAGEDY!

by NANCY LA LONDE

Cathedral Senior High, Duluth, Minnesota

After several years of inactivity, the Dramatics Club at Duluth Cathedral High School was re-organized under Sister Timothy O.S.B., last Fall. The first major undertaking of the club was to be the presentation of the three act play, "The People Versus Maxine Lowe." Many eager, excited would-be actors and actresses auditioned for the various parts in early December. After Christmas vacation rehearsals began in earnest. Every afternoon at 3:20 Sister Timothy and the budding Thespians would tromp across the street to the grade school building which houses our auditorium. Rehearsals led into January and the opening night of Sunday, January 29 drew nearer and nearer. But then one bleak frigid Tuesday, January 24, to be exact, tragedy struck. At 2:16 classes progressed as usual. Then at 2:20 all the students and instructors were staring out the west side windows. Staring in shocked disbelief. They watched the gray spirals of smoke curling their way upward and the orange tongues of flames licking savagely at the shingles on the roof. Within a matter of minutes the grade school children were safely outside and all the available fire fighting apparatus was on the scene. The firemen fought long and hard. For two and a half hours they clung precariously to icy ladders and a glazed roof top. By 5:00 the fire was under control, but Madam Blaze had wreaked her harvest of destruction. The holocaust had left the auditorium, which was located on the top floor of the grade school building, in a state of desolation. Charred rafters, water soaked seats and near useless curtains and scenery was the scene that confronted Sister Timothy the following morning.

Two days later Sister met with several members of the cast. The Dramatics club had a hard decision to make. They

could do one of two things: cancel the play or go ahead with it and find a new place to present it. Suggestions were made and cast aside. As a last resort Sister Timothy asked, "How about the Gym?"

"Where will we get props?"

"What will we use for a stage?" everyone inquired at once.

"Since all of the action of the play takes place entirely in a courtroom it won't be too difficult," Sister said, "and besides it will be kind of fun."

The new opening night of February 12 drew nearer and nearer, but this time fate dealt no unkind blows. The club members worked earnestly to transform the gym into a courtroom. A portable stage was rented and erected in the south end of the gym. The only props that were used were a judge's bench, the states attorney's table and the defense attorney's table. The jury, composed of adults from the audience was seated to the left of the stage. The rest of the audience was actually part of the courtroom.

The play went off smoothly, and judging by the comments of the audience afterwards it was a success.

Yes, it is all over now, but Sister Timothy and the dramatics club are glad they met the challenge and were successful.

## A LITTLE BIT OF CHINA

In preparation for their senior play, THE LUTE SONG, St. Joseph's Academy Genesiennes, Wheeling, West Virginia, were privileged to have Dr. Chang, professor of political science at Duquesne University, and Dr. Bill Hu, metallurgist in the research laboratories of Westinghouse at Pittsburgh, instruct them in Chinese mannerisms.

The gentlemen, both graduates of Notre Dame, went to Wheeling at the request of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

The production will be given in the Virginia Theatre on Wednesday, April 25. Sister Mary Immaculate, S.S.J. is head of the Drama department at St. Joseph's.

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# VALUES OF N.C.T.C. MEMBERSHIP

## A Survey of Student Opinion

by YVONNE MASON  
DOMINICAN HIGH SCHOOL, DETROIT

Of what value to the student is membership in the Catholic Theatre Conference? Here are some of the answers Dominican High School students have given to this question.

In our school the N.C.T.C. meetings are held twice a month. At each meeting some different technique of the theatre world is stressed. The meetings are always conducted by one of the student members in a manner that is both amusing and informative. By attending these meetings I have developed a more rounded view of the theatre and a deeper appreciation of dramatic art.

Judy Blake, Grade 11

My N.C.T.C. membership has helped me to realize the complications involved in staging even the simplest play. It has made me more conscious of the importance of an able director to any dramatic production. The student directors learn some of the technical intricacies involving movements on stage, reactions to dialogue, the necessity of correct projection, pronunciation, etc.

Susan Blow, Grade 11

Before I became a member of the N.C.T.C. I had no appreciation of the endless hours of memorizing that go into the presentation of any play; nor did I know anything about such things as directing, costuming, lighting, or make-up. Now I realize more fully the hard work that goes into any dramatic production.

Sharon Sargent, Grade 11

The local conferences of the N.C.T.C. give me a chance to learn what others think about the theatre, radio, and television. The N.C.T.C. monthly bulletin helps me to understand the different opinions of other teen-agers interested in theatre work, and enables me to get acquainted with their activities.

Mary Ann Morgan, Grade 11

Student membership in N.C.T.C. is important through the articles published in its monthly bulletin, it instructs us about techniques and behind-the-scenes happenings in the theatre world.

Sue Somers, Grade 11

The quality that has impressed me the most in our N.C.T.C. groups is "teamwork." We are all in it for one purpose—to learn more about drama and the theatre. With the end in view we all work together for a better theatre.

Gretchen Gleis, Grade 12

My N.C.T.C. membership has helped me to develop two very necessary qualities: poise and patience. It has made me realize that teamwork is just as important on the stage of life as it is on the legitimate stage.

Frances Goubert, Grade 11

One of the most important advantages of N.C.T.C. training is that it gives you a sufficient knowledge of the theatre so that, in the future, you will be able to tell a good play from a bad, or a simply indifferent one.

Yvonne Mason, Grade 11

A sure-fire formula for good times is N.C.T.C. The N.C.T.C. is fun and work, give and take, combined in one organization whose aim is to foster Catholic ideals in the theatre. As a N.C.T.C. member it is impossible for me not to be enthusiastic about the wonderful spirit manifested by all its members. In the N.C.T.C. there is a sharing of ideas and experiences. Through this organization we have learned what life in the theatre world is like. We have rid ourselves of the false notion that the theatre is all fun and glamour and no work.

Mary Ann Quinn, Grade 12

These, as those of you who are already members have long ago realized, are just a few of the values of membership in the National Catholic Theatre Conference. In summarizing them, we may note that, in general, they fall into two groups: first, and least important, are those experiences which help the student develop a better knowledge of the theatre and its work. Second, and more important, are those values which help the student develop a more likable personality and a better character. Those of you who already realize these values may wish to pass this bulletin on to some of your friends who, perhaps, do not know just how much they are missing!

## A RUSSIAN LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Written and produced by a committee of high school students, with the help of the faculty members, *A RUSSIAN LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS* will long be remembered as a thrilling and entirely new experience by all at St. Benedict's High School, St. Joseph, Minnesota.

Choosing a subject which many others would not dare to attempt (Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!) the dramatic and moving life of Baroness Catherine de Hueck was depicted in a play with musical background. From her childhood in Russia to Friendship House in Chicago, we see the sacrifice of the Mass relived again and again in the life of Catherine de Hueck. The entire play was portrayed through the mediums of music, singing, dancing, and dialogue.

The primary purpose of Friendship Houses, first started by Baroness de Hueck, is to help the poor (especially the Negroes) in large cities. Run on a volunteer basis by Lay Apostles who devote their lives to Our Lord in Catholic Action, this work is a manifestation of God's Divine Providence to the poor in the United States.

The music was directed by Sister Ancille, O.S.B., action by Sister Marcine, O.S.B., dancing by Miss Ruth Allen.

Helen McHugh  
Student Director



## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

(Continued from page two)

not high enough to hamper "those who work for King's undoing." It is true that anything basically good is allowed to rise until it becomes dangerous to the antithesis of Good. Now we are, and have been for many years, at stalemate in this respect. Morality in theatre does not rise, because the pitiful few who are cognizant of its value cannot raise it alone. No, there is no demand for Catholic Theatre; there is only a desperate need for it.

Now, what should we do to counteract this flood of non-Catholic drama that feeds the theatre today? Where should we dig in to launch our counterattack? The logical place seems to be in the little theatres. Existing community theatres are not doing, nor can they do the sort of plays we must do; therefore we must establish our own community theatres. But when we establish them, let us be sure we realize that this is to be a "theatre with a purpose" that produces only plays that are solidly Catholic. Let us find out first what a Catholic play is. It is quite disheartening to note the plays most of our so called Catholic theatre groups are producing under the heading of "Catholic." Most of them seem to fall into the following categories: (These are reprinted from Jean Strachan's article, "More About the Catholic Play," published in the Catholic Theatre of Rochester Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 3.)

1. **PLAYS WHICH PREACH RATHER THAN ENTERTAIN.** There are any number of these "educational," innocuous propaganda pieces, usually found in the "non-royalty" sections of the catalogues. Their morals are good, and they mean well, but Catholic Theatre subscribes to art which may teach only through contemplation—not compulsory indoctrination.

2. **PLAYS ABOUT RELIGIOUS BASED ON SENTIMENTALITY RATHER THAN SENTIMENT.** Having a priest or nun as the chief character is not enough, e.g., "Jenny Kissed Me." We oppose these on the basis of art also. Our art must be strong and clean and clear like the truth our church teaches.

3. **THOSE PLAYS WHICH ARE WELL WRITTEN, BUT AMORAL.** e.g., "Stage Door," "The Heiress." These are not in any way opposed to Catholic Theatre. They are the plays we might do quite validly as entertainment alone, except they do not add to our cause, and we have promised Him a "Theatre with a purpose."

When a theatre group that was originally intended to be a Catholic theatre can no longer be differentiated from the nonsectarian community theatre by its choice of plays, its policies of government, the attitude and spirit of its members and, most important of all, its reason for existing, then in fairness to the organizations that merit the title, it must cease to call itself Catholic. It is senseless to establish a theatre group under a specialized name and for a specialized purpose, which in itself sets it apart from all other groups, if it is not *different* from them. We have to be different.

Thus far this discussion in differences has embraced, in the main, only the differences in the plays produced by a Catholic theatre. The other important distinction lies in the Catholic theatre member. If a Catholic community theatre must be different—and it must—then so must its members. This is the basic argument for keeping the ranks of a Catholic theatre small in numbers, at least until it has its roots sunk so deeply that it cannot be overthrown. (And if you believe that this last consideration is easy to come by, you are living in a fool's paradise.) Consider a typical problem that the legislative boards of most Catholic Theatres must face.

From time to time the subject of a membership drive arises. The most prevalent of the reasons given in favor for such a thing are usually these two:

1. To increase our membership in numbers on the theory that the more members we have to choose from to work on a given production the better are our chances of coming up with a more solid cast, and the less our problems in gathering a crew of competent technicians and designers.

2. To swell the treasury with dues collected from these members.

Now, on the surface these arguments make so much sense that it usually takes something comparable in violence to one of the major eruptions of Vesuvius to blast these false, preconceived notions out of people's heads long enough to explain to them:—"Yes, these arguments would make sense anywhere but in a *Catholic* theatre group." Where Catholic Theatre is concerned the first suggestion is nonsense and the second is sheer extortion.

Let us enlarge a bit on that last statement; it demands it. First argument, front and center!

Q. What must be the primary aim of the *true* member of Catholic Theatre?

A. Personal sanctification through his unselfish participation in God-conscious theatre.

Q. What does this "unselfish participation" involve?

A. In a word—sublimation. (Sublimation, according to the dictionary, is the direction of "the energy of an impulse from its primitive aim to one that is culturally or ethically higher." I throw this little gem in for free because I know that most of you who don't know what sublimation means won't bother to look it up—and it is important here. R.B.) In other words, the Catholic theatre member must be willing to lose personal identity and become just one of the component parts of a machine that produces a pre-determined product. If he happens to be the best actor in town and, incidentally, played the lead in the first show of the season, then he must also—with the same gusto and *reverence*—confine himself to sweeping out the hall for the second show which placed no demands upon his talents as an actor. In a Catholic theatre production no one can be a star unless God thinks he is, and God picks His stars from the front of the house, and from backstage as well as from onstage, plus He doesn't need a program to single them out. Names aren't im-

(Continued on page fifteen)

## PROJECTING THE INTERIOR SCENE

*(Continued from page eight)*

Regarding perspective, the ideal situation is to take the photo from the same relative position the projector, when properly located above the screen for projection, will be, as has been said. However, there are several reasons why this may not be possible if one is photographing actual scenes as we did. First, the "depth of field" might not be sufficient; second, the physical limitations of the interior or outdoor scenes, such as low ceilings, too high trees or buildings may make it impossible; third, the undesirable illusion of shooting down, thus giving the audience the sensation that the scene or room is turned around, (and that they are sitting on a wall rather than, say, looking in through a doorway) may make it unfeasible. When these situations arise, a certain amount of compensation comes from being able to tilt the back of the View Camera, thus pulling the bottom of the vertical lines together. Again, this is necessitated by the fact that the projector will be the height of the screen or above it. I should suggest that the equipment consist of a 4 x 5 View Camera with a Wide Camera with a Wide Angle Lens for a 3 1/4" x 4" slide (90 m.m. Angulon Schneider). I suggest a wide angle lens because it has a greater depth of field and will have a focal length comparable to that of the projection lens. (If furniture is used it gives a normal appearance to the scene).

### Another Method

There is another way of taking the picture but that will be at the expense of time and money. The photograph may be taken from the normal viewpoint or one that fits the perspective of the rest of the scene and then re-photograph for distortion, which may be done from the transparencies.

Lighting is another problem for the photographer to consider. A flat front lighting arrangement is desirable, because it will not conflict with any style-lighting which may be planned for the stage. Of course, there are times when the photographer will want to do special-effects lighting to assist in the design of the stage scene—a sunlight scene when a strong light source should be used to simulate the sun. A reminder here is to be sure to use plenty of fillin light to eliminate "plugged-up" shadows. It is to be assumed that the photographer will follow the normal procedure for light and color balance in order to give an accurate color rendition; staying to the "thin" side for the transparencies so that a more brilliant picture may be obtained for projection.

### Use Color Film

It is obvious that color film must be used excepting possibly in the rare instance when a certain darkness may be desired in the set, in which case one can use black and white which could be sepiaed. The color film demands close attention to "size." The picture must be taken carefully so

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that when the projected scenery is flashed upon the screen any object in the picture—should there be any—will be of normal size and the photograph will fill the screen. When side screens are used, any horizontal lines must match in height; too high or too low on one side would be unrealistic. Here again the rule of "size" holds true. It is a "must" that all objects, such as furniture, when photographed be completely shown since anything cut off on a slide—say the 3 1/4" x 4" that we used in the last show—will be cut off in the scene, giving the appearance of being set in the floor.



### Photographing the Show

It may be interesting to know what planning we did for photographing the last show. We felt certain that we could photograph scenes from pictures procured at an interior decorator. Nothing could be found that would serve our purpose. There was only one thing left for us to do and that was to photograph actual rooms. It seemed that they were as difficult to locate as the pictures. This time we found the cocktail lounge, we would like, in one of the large clubs in the city and obtained permission from the manager to photograph it. The elaborate living room scene we photographed in the furnished rooms departments of the largest furniture store in Cedar Rapids. We chose for the rear screen a decorated room with an unusual wallpaper, a large davenport, and two end tables upon which were set two lamps; for the left screen, a harmonizing plain wallpaper, a fireplace, and two lovely chairs; and for the right screen, a loveseat, a small table and a lamp. The flooring in the transparencies had to be air sprayed black as we felt that black or an extremely dark floor covering would be necessary on the stage to prevent light from being reflected; the floor covering of the picture would have to correspond with that of the stage. By telephoning a real estate dealer in town we were able to locate a vacant house where we could photograph the walls of an old kitchen. It was not difficult to get the cafeteria scene or that of a very beautiful little chapel. We used as little furniture as possible. In the

*(Continued on page fifteen)*



## PLAYWRITING

(Continued from page two)

on a play of a few hundred years ago rather than take a chance on some of the flimsy substance of a twentieth-century play. But the classics were once modern, and they were written for a definite audience with its own very special problems. Today's problems are not those of yesterday. I know human nature does not change, but what made the classic a classic was its very modernity in its own day. Because it was true to its own time it does have something in it for all times. But we also need drama written by today's artists with their pulse on today's time.

### PLAYWRITING—A COURSE?

We might lament that our curriculum is already overcrowded without a formal course in playwriting being added. Perhaps such a course is not absolutely necessary if we use the other standard courses already in the curriculum, provided they are pointed toward playwriting. There are some things the student can be taught. And there are some things he comes to by nature. However, we cannot succumb to the comfortable idea that Plato's daemon is not operating in the students before us. Actually this 'divine madness' is not quite as mysterious as we sometimes like to think it is. If the student has a certain degree of sensitivity ingrained in his nature, if he responds in a little keener manner to the things around him, if he loves to read, if he loves to use words, to find for his many feelings the 'objective correlatives' as T. S. Eliot terms it, then our work as teacher can begin.

More than one course goes into the making of the playwright. Certainly the freshman composition and rhetoric course, if properly taught, should open the student's eyes to the structure of the language he will work with. He should learn here the intricate inter-workings of the old, old elements of grammar and rhetoric, and logic. All the history and literature courses should be so much fuel for the student's creative imagination, to say nothing of his theology and philosophy courses.

Technical training in building the plot is important. The student can learn how to construct a play through careful study of the masters, especially Shakespeare.

This might seem to be a round-about way of teaching playwriting, but at present I am analyzing quite minutely Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in a freshman course. I expect this to pay off later when from this group in the sophomore year I will get the creative writing students. A student who has had to plot the action chapter by chapter of such a carefully constructed novel as *Pride and Prejudice*, should have more than an elementary knowledge of plotting. Short story courses can also help to make the student aware of the nature of plot structure with its causal relationship of incidents built in a pattern of rising tension to the crisis, with

each incident in some way related to the basic theme of the play.

I know that it is commonplace to say that we must make the student write about the things he knows. But too often the young inexperienced writer thinks he must create black villains or mean and petty neurotics to parade before his audience. There are enough of these people in the daily news. How often we have heard the familiar groan, "But nothing ever happens to me!" And we have answered, "You have lived, haven't you? Maybe you have even loved a little, perhaps hated, cried sometimes and laughed sometimes, we hope. Make your work out of these emotions, your own emotions. And though they are like the emotions of millions of others, yet they are different, because they are your very own. No one has had the same reaction as you have had. It is your reactions to all the real and possible situations of life that provide the stuff for your play."

This advice holds true for all forms of writing. But especially in the dramatic field must we open the eyes of our students to the wealth of material that is waiting for them to mold into a plot structure, material surrounding the everyday life of a Catholic.

People outside the Church are hungry for the very material that seems so ordinary to us. And even those in the Church can have their eyes opened to the beauties that surround them by seeing these beauties in a new light. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the Seven Sacraments, the religious life, novenas, the rosary, and the thousand and one things that are part of our very breathing are new and alive to those who have not experienced them. We have the obligation to share. And for those students who have the gift of writing the obligation to share what is most precious is incumbent.

### COMEDY

The one kind of play that the young writer can do best is comedy. And yet without proper guidance he will rush off into the bleakest tragedy. The results are usually gruesome to say the least. They don't ring true. The writer has not experienced the emotions he is trying to portray. Murder, incest, adultery, suicide, lynchings—let's keep the student away from these. We should open his eyes to the material he can find within in his own family: the television problems, trying to go to college and keep a job at the same time, the struggle of being in the world but not of the world, the temptations in a materialistic, atheistic environment: all these subjects if treated with genuine sincerity can provide both laughter and tears. All of these subjects have within them the possibilities of conflict.

The West Central Region of NCTC is sponsoring a one-act playwriting contest next year. The scripts must be at the College of St. Teresa, Kansas City, Missouri, by December 1. The National office sponsored a contest this year. But all the contests in the world will be of no avail without the script. The script's the thing if we want a vital, modern Catholic theatre.



## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

(Continued from page twelve)

portant to Him, and neither should they be to the Catholic theatre member. (If your name is misspelled on the next Catholic theatre program, don't go complaining to the program chairman; your name shouldn't be there in the first place.)

To get to the root of things, the member is actually the basis of a Catholic theatre. The success and longevity of that group depends upon how much its members know. There must be instilled in these members; first of all, unity of purpose (no need to elaborate on that, we trust); secondly, purity of ideal (the old sublimation deal again); thirdly, but, as the old cliché goes, not last in importance, love: love of God, certainly, or it isn't worth the struggle, and love of our fellow man, or we could not graciously sweep the floor while the local "low man on the totem pole" plays the lead (we know we could have done it better) in that one show we have always wanted to play. (How do you like my syntax? R.B.) The amazing thing about this particular situation is that that person with at best a mediocre amount of talent, playing a part with a heart full of love and humility, seeking no personal aggrandizement, will nearly always turn in a performance that seems beyond the realm of possibility for him. Oh, yes, this sort of thing happens everywhere occasionally, but not with the frequency or consistency that it does on Catholic stages. After all, there is a Holy Ghost. These prerequisites of the Catholic theatre member are not easily or quickly acquired. It is a long, tedious task to implant them; therefore, a Catholic theatre can grow only as fast as its members can advance in the knowledge and practice of these principles. We dare not fill our ranks with people who will not accept our ideals. A membership drive is out of the question. We cannot morally or ethically ask people to work for our cause when we know that they cannot possibly reap any benefit from it. If we do this, we are defeating our own purpose, and worse than that, *we are committing sin!* As for recruiting members just to fill our coffers with dues extracted from them, this is nothing short of stealing. That should take care of argument number two.

The community theatre that calls itself Catholic certainly is not going to find the going easy. It cannot offer its members the comforts, the glamour or even the variety of productions that other theatre groups can offer. It simply has a job to do, and not an easy job at that. The odds are all against it. Yes, the Catholic community theatre must have magnificent courage to dare to be different.

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### CATHOLIC HOUR CHANGES TIME

The CATHOLIC HOUR, broadcast over the National Broadcasting Company radio network on Sunday afternoons, changed its time Sunday, February 26th. The new hour is from 2:30 to 3:00 P.M. EST, instead of 2:00 to 2:30 P.M.

## PROJECTING THE INTERIOR SCENE

(Continued from page thirteen)

living room scene all that was needed was a beautiful mahogany card table and two pretty chairs; the cocktail lounge, just a small table and three chairs; the cafeteria, a covered dining room table with salt and pepper and sugar bowl, and six chairs; the chapel, just a low pedestal upon which stood the girl representing a statue of the Blessed Virgin. The old kitchen had to be completely furnished as we had only the walls projected. Nevertheless, it took just slightly longer to shift the properties consisting of a large cupboard, a gas range, an old frigidaire, table and chairs because all the heavy pieces were on dollies. The blessings of rear projection and three screens were quite apparent here. There would not be shadow, and although the acting lights could not be used to show up furniture against the projected picture there was sufficient light coming from the screens to light it.

A truly serious case of distortion presented itself in the cafeteria scene. Naturally, it was desirable that the cafeteria table be on the rear screen, but there was such distortion apparent—the large coffee urns were badly converged—that it could not be remedied except projecting it on the left screen from a tilted projector.

Possibly one thing for the photographer to remember is that scenes for the same show must be taken from approximately the same distance, since it is difficult to change the position of high towers upon which the projectors rest. Pieces of furniture in the pictures must of necessity be of normal size, and if distance in the photography is not taken into consideration normalcy must be resorted to by shifting the projector. Difficult, as I say, during a production!

If we were scientific we would not allow this paper to be published until we knew all the answers. However, we are eager that others enjoy the satisfactions that go with putting on a play within projected scenery. To spur them on to an early trial we give them the knowledge that we have gained, that while we go on experimenting, some others may begin.

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### Just Between Us . . .

. . . and working on the "Teen" section has been a motivating force in my dramatics and typing classes as well. There was an added bit of excitement receiving mail from all over the country. Interest is heightened when the students recognize the names of fellow-conventioners at Notre Dame.

Sister Margaret Mary  
Monroe, Michigan

## What they're reading...

### JOE TRACY

New addition to the horizon of plays by Catholic authors is a one-acter entitled *Joe Tracy*, written by Philadelphian William J. Rigney. Published by the Walter H. Baker Company, Boston, Massachusetts, this play is designed primarily for Catholic College Theater Production.

The curtain rises on the Dean's office of any Catholic college campus about mid-June. Commencement festivities having been concluded, two graduating Seniors pay a final visit to the Dean, Father Daly, before departing from the college to assume their roles as potential Catholic leaders. The students are Tom Kelly, an English Education major, and Joe Tracy, valedictorian of the class.

During his conversation with Father Daly, Joe reveals his fervent ambition to enter the priesthood, a desire which has blossomed into full maturity as a result of the Dean's sermon entitled "Friendship with Christ" during a retreat held in Joe's Freshman year of college. A snag to Joe's future plans, however, occurs in the personage of Kit Flaherty, Joe's girl friend.

Upon Joe's exit from the office, Kit surmises Joe's intention to become a Religious. Kit does not take the news lying down, but vows that she will do all in her power to impel Joe to enter the sacrament of matrimony rather than to accept his divine call to Holy Orders. Father Daly endeavors to convince her that she must not thwart Joe's genuine vocation to the priesthood through personal selfishness—his efforts are of no avail. Their argument, and the play itself, comes to an abrupt and dramatic conclusion with the announcement—via telephone—of Joe's sudden death in an automobile accident.

Although the play is brief—only seventeen pages of dialogue—the characterization of Joe Tracy, Kit Flaherty and Father Daly is capably handled by Mr. Rigney as the play progresses. *Joe Tracy* appears to fall flat with the surprise fate of the hero. During the discussion between Father Daly and Kit, the reader is anxious to see which vocation Joe will eventually choose upon his return—will he fulfill his present desire and enter Holy Orders, or will he permit himself to be dissuaded by the marriage-minded Kit?

Although the element of surprise always adds greater intensity, as well as audience appeal, to a one-act play, this writer does not feel that an accident of such a momentous nature should be the resolving force in determining the future of the hero, Joe Tracy. The author's use of the accident angle seems to be the easiest, if not the most logical, solution to Joe's problem, whereas a definite decision on the part of Joe as to his future vocation might add that extra punch and body to the play which it lacks in its present form.

However, in order for a work of literature to be termed

great, the element of extension should be carried over to the reader or viewer of the play. Thus, when a play is concluded, the theater-goer should continue the trend of the story in his own mind. With the death of the hero, the conflict has not been resolved, Joe Tracy is dead—there can be no extension.

The above opinion is merely that—an opinion. It does not in any way, shape or form detract from the literary ability of Mr. Rigney, for that author does have a keen insight into human nature as such and shows definite talent as an up-and-coming Catholic dramatist. In fact, *Joe Tracy*, as it stands now, might be well-received by collegiate and adult audiences if presented on the amateur or legitimate stage. A segment of the theater-going public, unwilling to face reality by pinpointing a choice, would enjoy the climax with its quirk-of-fate ending. Hence, the play would be suggestive in that the viewer, or reader, could imagine which vocation Joe would choose if he had the opportunity, thus personalizing the decision of his own individual satisfaction.

JEAN CROSS

College of St. Mary of the Springs

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### HEART OF GOLD

or

### THE LADY WITH THE GOLDEN HEART

This is a three act play by Mary-Eunice Sayrahder of Mary Productions. The cast includes 7 women, 3 men, 7 children . . . 9 to 16 years of age. The story is about visions of the Mother of God seen by five children at Beauraing, Belgium in 1932-33. There are two settings . . . one an outdoor scene and the other an inside scene that can be shown by using a simple drop curtain . . . or lighting effects.

In these days of world chaos, of spiritual and physical ills, stories are needed that may awaken people to the true causes of world unrest . . . to teach us that we must return to God . . . as the only hope and remedy, and that we ought to heed the message of Mary and realize that Christ is the physician we seek.

Facts about this play have been taken from THE APPARITIONS OF OUR LADY AT BEAURAING by Canon H. Massart; FIVE CHILDREN by Rev. Paul Piron, S.J. and Rev. James F. Cassidy, and through many articles supplied by Rev. James F. Debergh, O.M. of the Pro Maria Committee of Lowell, Massachusetts. The title of the play is taken from the book of the same title by Delphine Fleury. For further information about other Marian plays or entertainment programs write to Mary Productions, 100 Randolph Avenue, Dumont 2, New Jersey.

